

California State Council of Laborers
Legislative Department



CALIFORNIA Business/Labor/Water Leaders Coalition

PROMOTING INVESTMENT IN CALIFORNIA'S WATER FUTURE

September 22, 1999

Mr. Lester Snow
CalFed Bay-Delta Program
1416 Ninth Street, Suite 1155
Sacramento, CA 95814

SEP 22 1999

RE: Draft Programmatic EIS/EIR

Dear Mr. Snow,

We are writing to you to express our concerns regarding CalFed's revised Phase II Report and accompanying Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement/Report for a comprehensive solution to the environmental and water management conflicts in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta which was released June 25, 1999. California's business community and water industry have been strong supporters of consensus-based solutions to these longstanding conflicts and continue to believe balanced, broadly supported solutions best guarantee meeting our future water needs.

We recognized early in the CalFed process the importance of immediately addressing environmental concerns in the Delta, and assisted in efforts to provide the funding necessary to implement ecosystem programs, such as 1996's Proposition 204 and matching federal funding. As a result of the 1999 legislative session, a \$1.97 billion water bond will be placed before the voters in March 2000, the largest water bond in California's history. By our accounting, more than \$1 billion is now in place for environmental restoration work in the Bay/Delta watershed.

However, we believe water supply and water quality issues are just as important, and CalFed itself declared improvements in those areas to be equal objectives of the overall program. Recent events in water supply operations such as the pumping reductions ordered for the benefit of Delta smelt last spring illustrate the vulnerability of the existing system. Yet the draft CalFed documents themselves offer little assurance that even current system deficiencies will be addressed to meet the existing or future needs for economic and population growth.

The near disastrous water shortage that was precipitated by the Delta smelt crisis in June highlighted the need for a renewed commitment by federal regulators to operate to the spirit of the Bay/Delta Accord and make the investments necessary to ensure a reliable water supply. As business leaders, we must have assurances of dependable, high quality water supply, and assurances that CalFed will focus on



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environmental improvements that avoid further taking of land and water.

Without such commitments, the CalFed program cannot succeed, and California's farms and businesses will not be willing to make the necessary economic and infrastructure investments for the future.

The CalFed program must expedite development of the necessary facilities to allow restoration of supplies water users have already dedicated to the environment, and for better management of future water supply, improved levee integrity and environmental conflicts. Unfortunately, the current plan sidesteps nearly every important decision that needs to be made regarding additional facilities. In order for California to regain control of its economic destiny, we must develop those facilities sooner rather than later.

We are also concerned about the program's pace in responding to ever-tougher drinking water quality and public health and safety standards. The Delta provides drinking water to more than 20 million Californians, who have repeatedly shown that they want safe, good quality water. The documents promise long-term improvements but provide no measurable benchmarks to gauge progress during the course of Stage One implementation. Urban water customers can have little confidence that this program will provide them with necessary water quality improvements in a timely manner. Furthermore, urban water suppliers could be forced to invest billions of dollars in costly and unproven new water treatment facilities to meet safe drinking water standards. There may be more cost-effective ways to improve water quality, yet the current program provides no objective decision-making process to fully assess that option.

California is now at a critical juncture. Water quality and water supply needs will only grow during the next decade. The CalFed program must be directed toward an implementation plan that will meet in a timely way both of these needs. We will look to Governor Davis and Secretary Babbitt to return the CALFED program to the correct and balanced course that was promised at its creation. Our common goal is one in which jobs, housing, agriculture, the economy, environmental needs and the needs of California's people can all be met. Thank you.

Sincerely,
(signatories)

CC: Davis, Babbitt, California Congressional delegation, State Senate & Assembly

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Donald Gordon 1453-1
President
Agricultural Council of California

Thomas Holsman 1453-2
Executive Vice President
Associated General Contractors of California

Stephen K. Hall 1453-3
Executive Director
Association of California Water Agencies

Karen Ross 1453-4
President
California Association of Winegrape Growers

Timothy L. Coyle 1453-5
Senior Vice President / Government Affairs
California Building Industry Association

Rex S. Hime 1453-6
President & CEO
California Business Properties Association

Allan Zaremborg 1453-7
President
California Chamber of Commerce

Vic Weisser 1453-8
President
California Council for Environmental and Economic Balance

Bill Pauli 1453-9
President
California Farm Bureau Federation

Jack Stewart 1453-10
President
California Manufacturers Association

Chuck Center 1453-11
Director
California State Council of Laborers

Jason Peltier 1453-12
Manager
Central Valley Project Water Association

Walter J. Bishop 1453-13
General Manager
Contra Costa Water District

Thomas Clark 1453-14
General Manager
Kern County Water Agency

Timothy Quinn 1453-15
Acting General Manager
Metropolitan Water District of Southern California

Allen Short 1453-16
General Manager
Modesto Irrigation District
Coordinator
San Joaquin River Group

Chris Williams 1453-17
Executive Director
Mountain Counties Water Resources Association

Stanley E. Sprague 1453-18
General Manager
Municipal Water District of Orange County

Don Bransford 1453-19
Chairman
Northern California Water Agencies

Robert Clark 1453-20
General Manager
North Delta Water Agency

Gordon Hess 1453-21
Director of Imported Water
San Diego County Water Authority

Steve Chedester 1453-22
Executive Director
San Joaquin River Exchange Contractors Water Authority

Daniel Nelson 1453-23
Executive Director
San Luis & Delta-Mendota Water Authority

Stanley Williams 1453-24
General Manager
Santa Clara Valley Water District

Steve Zapotoczny 1453-25
Chairman
Southern California Water Committee

Bob Balgenorth 1453-26
President
State Building and Construction Trades Council of California

Kevin Kauffman 1453-27
General Manager
Stockton East Water District

Art Bullock 1453-28
General Manager
Tehama Colusa Canal Authority

Thomas Hurlbutt 1453-29
President
Tulare Lake Basin Water Storage District

David L. Moore 1453-30
President
Western Growers Association

David Orth 1453-31
General Manager
Westlands Water District

cc: President Bill Clinton
California Congressional Delegation
California State Legislature
Resources Agency Secretary Mary Nichols
DWR Director Thomas Hannigan

William Taube 1453-32
Engineer - Manager
Wheeler Ridge-Maricopa Water Storage District